IN THE CLAIMS:

a. Please cancel claims 1-13.

b. Please enter the following claims:

1-13. (Cancelled)

14. (Previously Presented) A method of supplementing a cleaning and sterilizing process for a soiled item having bio-contaminants, comprising the steps of:

a. pre-rinsing said soiled item with ozone to loosen the soil,

b. applying a cleaning agent to the soiled item,

c. cleaning said soiled item until a clean item is produced,

d. applying a chemical sterilizing agent to said clean item to achieve high-level disinfection,

e. rinsing the high-level disinfected item with water; and

f. rinsing the high-level disinfected item with ozone to substantially degrade any remaining chemical residue and biomatter on or in said disinfected item.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said soiled item comprises an endoscope.

16. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein ozone comprises an ozonated liquid.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein said ozonated liquid includes between 0.1 and 15 percent ozone by volume.

18. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said soil comprises biofilm.

19. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein step b additionally comprises applying ozone in combination with said cleaning agent.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, wherein said chemical sterilizing agents are selected from the group consisting of glutaraldehyde, ~~paracetic~~ peracetic acid, and ethylene oxide.

21. (Previously Presented) A method of preventing re-contamination of a cleaned and high-level disinfected item, comprising:

a. rinsing said cleaned and high-level disinfected item with water; and

b. flushing said item with ozone.

22. (Original) The method of claim 21, wherein said item is an endoscope.

23. (Original) The method of claim 21, wherein said water is filtered tap water.

24. (Original) The method of claim 21, wherein the flushing of said item with ozone is achieved by ozonating said water.

25. (Original) The method of claim 21, wherein said item is contained within a cleaning or sterilizing apparatus when step b occurs.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein ozone is added to the water prior to the water entering the cleaning or sterilizing apparatus containing said item.

27. (Previously Presented) A method of preventing cross-contamination of components within a sterilizing apparatus, comprising:

a. high-level disinfecting an item placed within said sterilizing apparatus according to a predetermined method; and

b. flushing said components with ozone after the completion of step a.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein said components comprise a chamber, a filter, a tray, and a port.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, wherein said components comprise fill lines.